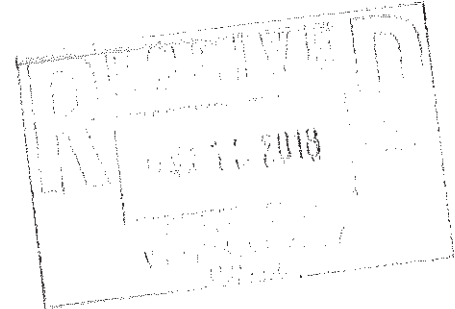


EAST BROOKLYN CONGREGATIONS
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December 12, 2018

Honorable Judge William H. Pauley III
United States District Court Judge
Daniel Patrick Moynihan
United States Courthouse
500 Pearl St.
New York, NY 10007-1312



Re: Public Comment on the Case, United States of America V. New York City Housing Authority (Case Number 18cv5213).

Dear Judge Pauley,

We urge you to invite Mayor William de Blasio to appear in court and explain to you and the people of New York how he intends to correct the dangerous and worsening conditions faced by half a million New Yorkers in public housing. We agree with you that a full measure of accountability starts at the top.

As pastors and leaders of East Brooklyn Congregations and Metro Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), we have borne witness to the extraordinary suffering that our members have faced under this and previous mayors. We follow the example of Jesus who taught us to alleviate the suffering the poor and forgotten. Our children, grandparents and families endure toxic mold, lead paint, unhealthy air, rat infestations and broken elevators. Many of them testified before you at your hearing in September. Nothing has changed since then and it's time that Mayor de Blasio is compelled to act.

We believe that no matter what the challenges in NYCHA the core issue that underlies these challenges to health and well-being is the issue of accountability. What we have seen, first-hand, by visiting thousands of apartments and verifying stories from our congregants and neighbors who call NYCHA home, is a deep and troubling history of neglect, indifference, and outright fabrication by NYCHA executives. Many black and Latino residents feel treated like second-class citizens.

The breakdown in accountability is endemic at every level of NYCHA and City Hall -- from local managers who fail to respond to NYCHA residents to the mayor and his top associates, who are entrusted with the management of NYCHA.

Our sister organizations in Manhattan and the South Bronx brought the Baez v. NYCHA case in the last weeks of the Bloomberg era in 2013 because we all knew that NYCHA and City Hall had to be held to account by an independent authority for the failure to properly repair mold and excess moisture conditions. Under Mayor de Blasio, the problem of asthma-inducing mold has only worsened over the last five years. We thank you for your recent approval of the revised consent decree. We are confident that the new standards and strong independent oversight in this settlement will be important tools to resolve this critical problem.

However, as you have noted, mold is just one of many "plagues" facing NYCHA families. Because of this, East Brooklyn Congregations and Metro IAF leaders went to the US Attorney in March, 2015 and convinced that office to open an investigation into all aspects of the corruption, disrepair and willful indifference at NYCHA under this mayor.

A year ago, 6,000 NYCHA residents, pastors and leaders turned out in the pouring rain to bring attention the worsening conditions in public housing and the affordable housing crisis.

Mayor de Blasio is the person who could begin to turn this tale of woe into a tale of transformation. Thus far, as you heard at the September hearing and all of New York can plainly see, the mayor and his appointees have failed miserably.

The mayor, his inner circle and closest advisors remain fixated on elevating his national profile. The will, energy, and schedule of the mayor and his aides have all been evident there.

You are in a unique and important position. You have the ability to bring a necessary reckoning to Mayor de Blasio.


At the next public hearing on United States of America V. New York City Housing Authority, we urge you to call the mayor to publicly account for the miserable conditions that persist in NYCHA. We respectfully request that you demand from the mayor to detail how he will devote his time, the time of his top staff, and the resources of the City of New York to the creation of a plan to improve NYCHA. The goal must be to make measurable improvements to the health and safety of each development, building and apartment.

We believe that the mayor should then be asked to provide a weekly written report to the court on what he himself is doing to improve NYCHA leadership, remove NYCHA executives who are indifferent or worse, and work effectively with groups and institutions in the city committed to NYCHA's renewal.


For the entire time that we have been pressing NYCHA and City Hall for improvements -- through public action, media attention and court intervention -- our goal has been meaningful mayoral accountability and change. Like the persistent widow in Luke 18 who faced down an uncompassionate judge, the leaders of East Brooklyn Congregations and Metro IAF will not give up until all our families and congregants get the respect, dignity and justice they deserve.

Mayor de Blasio remains aloof when it comes to this calamity -- one that began in previous administrations but has worsened and accelerated in his. We urge you to demand direct accountability and meaningful change.


Sincerely,




Reverend Shaun J. Lee, Pastor
Mt. Lebanon Baptist Church



Reverend David K. Brawley, Lead Pastor,
St. Paul Community Baptist Church



The Reverend Edward Mason, Pastor
Our Lady of Mercy &
Our Lady of Presentation RC Church



The Reverend Joseph Hoffman, Pastor
St. Barbara's Catholic Church

CC: Robert Yalen Esq, United States Attorney's Office, Southern District